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19 April 1966

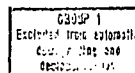
MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Aleks KURGVEL

1. As a result of Subject's memorandum dated 1 April 1966 concerning his involvement in Estonian emigre political affairs together with a request for Agency guidance, it was agreed with his supervisor, [] and Chief, SR/O/PT that I would meet KURGVEL, listen to his story and provide whatever guidance was required. The problem area is KURGVEL's distant involvement in Estonian emigre politics and in particular with matters relating to the current HEINE/RAUS case. Accordingly, I met KURGVEL by appointment at the Sirloin and Saddle Restaurant in Rosslyn on 14 April and had an hour's discussion over a couple of non-operational beers.

2. I told KURGVEL that I had read his memorandum but that the subject was sufficiently involved so that I would appreciate a very brief resume from him. I emphasized that I would mainly try to clarify his own thinking with respect to his involvement in Estonian emigre matters and that I would probably not ask him or direct him to take any particular course of action on behalf of the Agency. He then briefly summarized the contents of his memorandum. He told me that he had known and respected Juri RAUS for some time and indeed had been RAUS' instructor in project AEDEPOT. Although project AEDEPOT was under Army cover he feels moderately sure that RAUS suspects the true affiliation of the project and therefore realizes that he (KURGVEL) is connected with the Agency. KURGVEL has always belonged to the New York Chapter of the Legion of Estonian Liberation, and he filled me in on the current developments in this Chapter and his general feeling that it is being taken over by unfriendly elements, some of them possibly leftist inspired. At the same time, he was elected last year to the presidium of the national Legion organization and was elected as Deputy Chairman. He had accepted these posts with the national organization primarily to give support to Juri RAUS who was under fire from certain quarters as a result of the controversy ranging within the Legion and within the Estonian emigration on the HEINE matter. The New York Chapter had elected to remove itself from the national organization in protest against RAUS' chairmanship. Therefore KURGVEL found himself in a curious position in that he belonged to the non-affiliated New York Chapter and was at the same time a Deputy Chairman of the national organization.

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3. KURGVEL's involvement in New York rather than in Washington originates from the fact that he has continued to make his home in New York despite his Washington employment. The background for this is that his wife has a good job in a New York bank and looks forward to retirement under a pension plan. At age 57 she would find it hard to get any sort of employment of this kind if she were to move to Washington. They also own a two-family home in Queens (?), the second apartment of which provides them a rental income. Thus poor KURGVEL is forced to keep his residence in New York and to make the round trip every weekend to visit his wife. He accepts the necessity for this very stoically, which is a credit to him.

4. If we were to direct him to do so KURGVEL would remove himself completely from Estonian emigre affairs, and I must admit that with the horrible involvement currently facing us as a result of the HEINE/RAUS case there is some temptation to suggest to him that he get out completely. On balance, however, I feel that this would be a somewhat hysterical over-reaction to the HEINE/RAUS mess and not at all necessitated by any serious analysis of KURGVEL's very moderate involvement in Estonian affairs. This man is very close to retirement age. As a former Estonian Army officer he takes a certain pride in the respect afforded him by his fellow countrymen in the emigration, and a continuing ideological attachment to his native land is surely a real part of his life. There is no good reason for us to deprive him of this. This, roughly, is the background for my discussion with him and for my suggestions as to his future course of action.

5. I told KURGVEL that I was currently in touch with RAUS and was fully aware of the entire involvement. I warned him very emphatically against inserting himself into the HEINE/RAUS picture in any way whatsoever, emphasizing that he must not get himself into any position where he could be sued by an unfriendly opposition. With this as background, however, I told him that I saw no reason for him to get out completely from the Legion. I did feel that it might be best for him to do what he himself had concluded was advisable, i.e., to resign his post as an officer in the national organization. The basis of this to his compatriots would be that as a government employee (Department of Defense) he had decided that membership in the Legion was perfectly legitimate but that a leadership role was not advisable. He agreed to this proposition and further agreed that if he were questioned as to whether his resignation was prompted by the Government his answer would be negative; he would state that he had personally reviewed his own position and the decision as to the incompatibility of his Government job and the leadership post in the Legion was his alone.

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6. On the question of remaining in the New York Chapter or leaving it to join the Washington Chapter I told him that his own instincts were probably the best guide. His feeling was that if he stayed in the New York Chapter he would be able perhaps to exert a vote occasionally in the right direction while if he resigned from it he would be leaving the field of battle to the enemy (the left wing). Thus, he would prefer to remain in the New York Chapter and would do so unless we saw some strong objection. I told him that there was no objection from our side and that our only warning was that he should avoid any controversy which might subject him to the kind of suit which RAUS is now undergoing. He must never speak as a representative of the U.S. Government nor attack HEINE or anybody else in such a way as to open himself to prosecution of any kind.

7. KURGVEL is a mature, sober individual and I feel confident that we can trust him to comport himself properly while remaining at least nominally within the Legion.

8. One other subject of discussion came up when we talked about the future. KURGVEL must look forward to retirement at some time within the relatively near future and the lack of a pension or retirement plan other than Social Security is a matter of great concern. It should be emphasized that he did not himself raise the question or make any sort of complaint. He did say, however, that he and his wife have almost no capital and that they must continue to work as long as possible in order to provide for their old age. This is the reason for continuing the burdensome travel to and from New York on weekends. I told him that there was at least an outside chance that something might be done about a retirement plan within the not too distant future but that there was nothing definite on this as yet and he must not count on it as a fact. Parenthetically, if and when KURGVEL should retire prior to the implementation of any pension plan for contract employment, I feel that we will have a moral obligation to do something for him in recognition of his long service with the Agency. Whether this should be a termination bonus or some other form of emolument can be decided at that time.

C/SR/O/AC

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